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## The Passing of "The Quest"

Initial from  
"The Quest"

**N**O periodical ever published kept more strictly and consistently to the plan outlined for itself than "The Quest," the magazine issued three times a year, for two years, from the press of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft, and which began at the end of 1894 and was discontinued at the close of 1896. Its projectors, Mr. C. M. Gere, Mr. E. H. New, and Mr. Gaskin, are described by Mr. Walter Crane in his new book on the "Decorative Illustration of Books," as the leaders of the Birmingham School of Art, Mr. Gere being an accomplished engraver on wood of his own designs, Mr. Gaskin being well known by his charming decorative illustrations for various books of fairy tales, and Mr. New being an accomplished designer, with much feeling for the quaint old houses and streets of England. These artists and craftsmen set themselves the difficult task of bringing to bear upon a magazine the same principles of bookmaking, regarding technical production and decorative illustration, as those which governed the work of William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, and "The Quest" was accordingly printed by hand at the private press belonging to the Guild and decorated

throughout, full-page illustrations and all, with line designs in what is popularly known as the "old wood-cut" style, first made familiar to us in this country through the work of Walter Crane.

**N**OW a certain admirable product has been so over-used and abused in America of late that one might almost make a point of saying that in spite of the fact that it was printed on handmade paper, "The Quest" was almost always governed with perfect taste, there being only one or two illustrations and pages of printing in all the numbers issued to which an eye consistently critical might make objection from the severe standpoint of the magazine itself.

When one thinks of the thousands of tons of hideous periodicals that are shoveled out to the public every month, each copy still further vitiating the already doubtful taste of the people, this is praise indeed, for the proprietors of "The Quest" set themselves an exceedingly high and unusual standard.

**T**O understand fully what we mean, consider the principles of printing and bookmaking which govern the production of the best illustrated magazines of today, the most interesting and those which give us the most valuable material. Judged by the eye alone, "The

Century," "Harper's" and "Scribner's" are mere scrap-books; with all their illustrations completely detached from the text, so far as appearances go. No one denies the value of the illustrations, nor do we care to enter into an argument as to the desirability of sacrificing their practical value and interest to a more beautiful general effect; but only state it as a fact that æsthetically they make a sorry show alongside "The Quest."

**THAT** the modern methods of popular illustration can be artistically used has been proven by two publishers in this country, one Mr. George F. Kelly, of New York, who published for a few years "Current Art and Architecture," and Bates and Guild, of Boston, who issue the very fine "Architectural Review." They use all of their illustrations in a decorative way, and are the only ones who do, so far as we know. It is noticeable, by the way, that they both avoid "vignetting," and treat the illustrations as square or oblong parts of their large pages.

**TYPOGRAPHICALLY** "The Quest" belongs to the same school of printing as Modern Art, being printed on a Dutch handmade paper smaller and squarer than that we use, and with a cover of the same kind of paper as ours, only of a light, greyish green in color. Its type is not quite so heavy, but about the same size, and the printed page is of a single column, not being so wide as our type page is now or has been in the past. The book gives one the pleasant impression of having been leisurely and

thoughtfully edited and printed. It shows the influence of the Kelmscott Press, which is but natural, its projectors having done illustrations for Kelmscott books. An article by William Morris also appears in one of the early numbers, being a good-natured and affectionate description of the architectural charm of the old building which he made his home, Kelmscott House.

**CRITICISM** which should be made of "The Quest" is of the numerous blank pages in the last number, one bearing the title of the picture being inserted before each illustration. As these illustrations were all drawn especially to print opposite type pages, these sheets are logically superfluous, and are certainly so in effect. They give entirely too much white in the book, and unpleasantly suggest padding. However, the magazine deserves, as stated before, the unusual honor of having always stood consistent in type and illustration from cover to cover; even to the charming series of designs for "Stickfast Paste" on the last advertising page of each number.

The plates on these pages, all from "The Quest," are kindly loaned by Mr. D. B. Updike of Boston, who was American publisher for the magazine during the last year.

